



SURREY ART GALLERY

In the Realm
of Perception
Nicoletta
Baumeister

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Nicoletta Baumeister: In the Realm of Perception

Printed on the occasion of the exhibition
Nicoletta Baumeister: In the Realm of Perception

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House and Home, ca. 2013
Oil on Venetian plaster on board

The Cartography of the Mind: Nicoletta Baumeister's Painted Worlds

Rhys Edwards

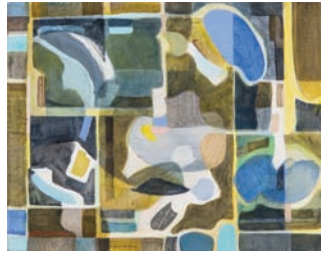
An abstraction is never only an abstraction. Mark-making in its essential form is the outcome of mentation. To approach a surface with the purpose of rendering something non-objective—whether it is a process of spontaneous, dynamic imagination or an exercise in purely formal, surface-sensitive arrangement—is all the same the expression of an intention. It is the brain thinking about itself.

In this way, the distinction between abstract art, and figurative or 'representational' art, is a non-starter. Formally speaking, they are distinguished only by the extent to which the interior self predominates in the image content. In figurative art, the interior self, intentionally or otherwise, arrives upon the surface of the image through a series of symbolic substitutions, whereas in abstraction, the interior self generates substitutions of its own devising. All art is, among other things, a metaphor for a particularly concentrated instance of selfhood.

Nicoletta Baumeister's art is not abstract, yet, it is not figurative either. Within either term, its opposite resides. Her abstractions are a self-reflexive rendering of the synthesis of meaning itself, while her figurations are a breakdown of the elements through which we determine a reality which we believe to be pre-eminent. Thus it is an art of spectra, organized by an internal logic that may be gleaned only through intensive and sustained engagement. Baumeister traces for us the continuity between figuration and abstraction; between subject and object; between selfhood and otherhood; and between interior and exterior.

In a sense, her exhibition *In the Realm of Perception*, is a meta-exhibition. By using the terms of traditional painting, as storied by institutional dissemination, we are drawn into a space embedded with a value-laden familiarity. As a commercial painter, it is arguably the case that Baumeister has been so successful because of the popularity of her style of imagery within the ordinary visual realm (e.g., floral studies, portraiture, mineral specimens, etc.); so it is precisely from these terms that her critique of this imagery derives its potency. It is through the reconfiguration of the terms of painterly language—a syntactic breakdown—that Baumeister's poetry emerges. Poetry derives its power from the capacity to destabilize pre-determined meanings and introduce alternative definitions, upending language; in Baumeister's work the language in question is the series of symbols and metaphors we use, unknowingly, to navigate quotidian reality. Thus, through the examination of Baumeister's images, we are drawn inward. We look at ourselves looking.

In the Realm of Perception was conceived of as an overview into the act of looking, as encountered in the works of Nicoletta Baumeister. It is divided into two distinct,



Construct of Intuition, 2009

though interrelated, halves: the first focuses on realist watercolour works from earlier in the artist's career (dating from the early 1990s to the mid-aughts), while the second features more recent works (from the mid-2000s onward), from the artist's 'Dynamics' series, which employ the use of acrylic in the rendering of abstract mental landscapes. In several locations in the exhibition, however, these techniques and conceptual strategies overlap and bend back upon themselves, reflecting the eclecticism central not only to Baumeister's working method, but the various fields of inquiry with which her work interfaces. One such set of overlapping works is Baumeister's series of Diptychs, developed in the early 2000s. In each, a highly detailed watercolour painting of a natural specimen—leaves, plants, pebbles—is paired with a geometric abstraction which shares the same colour palette. Each image functions as a trace or index of the other; and the apparent "reality" underlying the image is suspended between the two. The presence of the "original" specimen primes the mind to perceive the abstraction as a form both grounded in and derived from the real world; likewise, the abstraction undermines the coherency of the specimen, re-casting it into the visual substrate from which it is ultimately composed. This dichotomy, here and in other works, is reflected by the exhibition's layout. The two fields of production are divided by the Gallery's exhibition space, but each bleeds into the other, the circular path of movement de-stabilizing any notion of a linear, chronological development.

As Dorothy Barenscott's subsequent essay illustrates, Baumeister's art is both addressed to, and derived from, multiple art historical references. Yet, the apparently traditional parameters of painting within which Baumeister works belie the paradox at the heart of her practice: the drive towards simultaneously representing and instantiating psychological events. Just as much as works like *Construct of Intuition* (2009), for example, illustrate how an inner psychological process informs the interpretation of a given dataset, so do they themselves require these very processes in order to be interpreted. As such, insofar as they are "ordinary" paintings, so too are they akin to pedagogical or scientific experiments; they provide a framework in which to experience and analyze reality itself.

In many respects, Baumeister's work encapsulates concerns which have shaped the fields of psychology and philosophy since the mid-19th century. In this regard, artistic figures such as J.M.W. Turner, and later, the entire Impressionist movement, were congruent with emerging theories circulated by thinkers such as Goethe, Ruskin, and Schopenhauer. These figures were united in their recognition of the fact that the camera lucida had lost its authority as a vision of truth;¹ the same may be said of the photograph in today's virtual era. Both artists and thinkers began to turn inward, emphasizing that perception was not merely the passive viewing of the material world, but an actively creative process embodied directly within the observer herself.

In this context, the symbolic principles traditionally associated with painting

began to shift. Whereas historically Western painting had concerned itself with representation, serving as a staging ground of sorts for ideological dissemination (both socially and more specifically about the role of painting itself), in this moment painting gained a new set of connotations: that of embodying perception. Here, painters were not only producers of symbols, self-referential or otherwise; they illustrated how perception was embodied within a creative agency that had hitherto been unrecognized.

Given the disjunction between images and sense-making, scientific scholars began a concerted effort to analyze and understand the effects of sensory data upon the body. Among the first empirical attempts to quantify the impact of sensory data upon the mind were those conducted by the physicist and philosopher Gustav Fechner, in the mid-19th century.² By establishing Weber's Law, which could mathematically measure subjective sensation, Fechner demonstrated that there is a disproportionate though predictable relation between increase in stimulation and perception, and that perception is temporally contingent upon a previous sequence of stimuli.³ Fechner's findings would influence the work of Ernst Mach, who argued that scientific inquiry should be limited only to what could be discerned by the senses,⁴ and Franz Brentano, whose theory of intentionality situated the observer directly within the passage of sensory phenomena.⁵ In turn, Mach and Brentano informed an entire generation of scholars across multiple disciplines, including gestalt psychology, phenomenological philosophy, and theoretical physics. Each of these fields is united in their foregrounding of the human figure within her surroundings, arguing for the irreducible reciprocity between human perception and the world as it is known to us. Such thinking would find artistic flowering in figures as diverse as Cézanne and the Post-Impressionists, Hilma af Klint and the Theosophists, Magritte and the Surrealists, and subsequent movements like Fluxus, Minimalism, Land Art, and more.

Many of Baumeister's works provide acute portrayals of the principles suggested by these figures. In *Turning Point of a System* (2005), for instance, the eye is presented with what appears to be a grid composed of polygonal shapes; upon closer inspection, however, the 'grid' in question is non-contiguous. As the eye travels along any one of its vertices, it is eventually interrupted by an irregular form perpendicular to the original line direction of movement; the pattern which seemed to derive from the work's composition encounters a "turning point." In this way, Baumeister forces the eye to continually move, in an effort to retain a grasp of a structural composition which may only be glimpsed from a distance. The perpetual internal turning of the composition reflects Fechner's findings in the field of psychophysics: each individual point of breaking is cognizable by us only in virtue of the sensory patterns which precede it. As such, the intricacy of Nicoletta's composition may only emerge upon direct apprehension of the work.

Other works point more actively to the role of the viewer in their constitution.



Turning Point of a System, 2005



Under One Roof, 2019

Possibilities (2010) presents the viewer with a complex array of rectilinear patterns and organic shapes, rendered in a phosphorescent colour scheme. As the eye moves over the image, various forms appear to advance and recede; crucially, however, their movement is contingent upon a prior selection made by the viewer. Choosing to focus on one point within the dark, rectilinear patterning causes every other instance of it appear to move to the “foreground” of the image while flattening the non-linear shapes; focusing on the latter, by contrast, will cause the eye to observe the continuity between them as they pass simultaneously “over” and “under” the linear patterning. Of course, all the painted forms are ultimately contiguous with each other; their cohesion only emerges through the intentioned activity of both the artist and the viewer. In this sense *Possibilities* is no less illusory than many of the artist’s older, realist watercolour paintings. They are examples of gestalt psychology in action: with limited visual information, the human mind synthesizes a coherency among data where none lies in reality.

More recent theories in the study of perception suggest that consciousness is itself entirely metaphorical.⁶ Through the sustained interaction between recurrent visual structures, motor activities, and mental images, consciousness develops elaborate associative patterns that inform subsequent mental activity and integrate disparate sensory phenomena into enduring percepts. Such patterns may be identified both literally and figuratively in many of Baumeister’s works; notably, for *In the Realm of Perception*, the artist developed a vitrine-based installation entitled *Under One Roof* to provide visitors with the opportunity to examine the development of conceptual thinking *in situ*. Through the arrangement of a series of cups, of varying origin, shape, and material, juxtaposed with various orientational statements, viewers are encouraged to attempt to see each cup as it really “is;” a discrete object situated among others, rather than an abstract idea contained within an overarching category, as our ordinary routines would have us see it.

The consistent prolificity of Baumeister’s artistic production speaks to the urgency of sensing and understanding. Until any assertion can be made about the world, a common understanding is required between individuals in order to make sense of it; yet, as the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl suggested, most fields of inquiry make uncritical assumptions about the human capacity to transcend one’s immediate environs and cast judgements about abstract states of affairs.⁷ The problem of epistemology remains just as salient now, in the early 21st century, as it did in the 19th. In the face of overwhelming volumes of digital records and the ascension of mass disinformation campaigns, we find ourselves faced with the question of how to understand what we are faced with. There remains the perpetual obligation to conduct the classical Cartesian reduction: to conceive of a grounding from which we can spring our investigation.

In addressing herself to the theme of perception over the course of three

decades, Baumeister’s work eternally returns to the question of how to arrive at a true understanding. That the artist continues to address this subject reflects its pre-eminence, not just in artistic discourse, but generally. Until we learn how to understand the biases and errors that cloud our judgment, we cannot make truthful assertions about a subject. Until we recognize the decisions we make subconsciously, we cannot fully know how we arrived at any given interpretation. Until we realize the patterns we have been uncritically following, we cannot learn how to change our path. Through the careful cultivation of critical thinking skills and the re-evaluation of conceptual paradigms, it is possible to change our habits. Baumeister shows us the way.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Crary, “Visionary Abstractions,” from *Surroundings Surrounded: Essays on Space and Science*, ed. Peter Wiebel (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002): 131.

2. “Psychology.” *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia*, Jan. 2018, p. 1; EBSCOhost, search. ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&Auth-Type=cookie,ip,url,cpid&custid=s4540785&db=funk&AN=ps146200&site=ehost-live.

3. Crary, 131.

4. “Mach, Ernst.” *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia*, Jan. 2018, p. 1; EBSCOhost, search. ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&Auth-Type=cookie,ip,url,cpid&custid=s4540785&db=funk&AN=ma004600&site=ehost-live.

5. Brendan Prendeville, “Merleau-Ponty, Realism and Painting: Psychophysical Space and the Space of Exchange.” *Art History* 22, no. 3 (September 1999): 364–88.

6. Stanley A. Mulaik. “The Metaphoric Origins of Objectivity, Subjectivity, and Consciousness in the Direct Perception of Reality.” *Philosophy of Science* 62, no. 2 (1995): 283–303.

7. “Over against the thinking, rich in presuppositions, which has as its premises the world, science, and sundry understandings bearing on method, and rooted in the scientific tradition as a whole, a radical form of the autonomy of knowledge is here active, in which form of datum given in advance, and all Being taken for granted, is set out as invalid, and there is a reversion to that which is already presupposed implicate in all presupposing and in all questioning and answering, and herewith of necessity exists already, immediate and persistent.” From Edmund Husserl, *Ideas* (London: Collier Books, 1962): 12.



Installation view of
Nicoletta Baumeister:
In the Realm of Perception

Nicoletta Baumeister Lost In Transfer

Dorothy Barescott

When we examine the world through a painted image, we are invited to perceive. It is through the act of perception that we come to discern, to recognize, to raise awareness, and to regard with attention. How and why and through what means a painting is created is seldom the focus. Instead, we are most often seduced by the talents of the painter, or the traditional mimetic function of the medium to represent some knowable reality or state of experience. But perhaps most of all, we are often seeking something authentic through the painted image, knowing that we are looking at a material object created by the hands of a human being. When Nicoletta Baumeister is asked what it means to be a painter in a digital world, she responds that for her the most valuable art is the one where somebody is thinking, experiencing, and discovering, not just replicating. Intuition and feeling, and trusting one's own senses, are prioritized in her art practice. "Really good art," explains Baumeister, "nurtures you."

In today's technologically accelerated and distracted screen culture—where the world of entertainment, news media, our family and friends, advertisers, and even the world of art, co-mingle visual environments—contemporary artists are challenged to employ conceptual strategies that reveal manifold mechanisms of representation and slippery notions of the *real*. Within this context, Baumeister's desire to nurture her audience is driven by a passion to both raise awareness around the contingent and unfixed aspects of reality, but also to capture audience interest through the mechanisms of authentic human observation, memory, and attention. For Baumeister, the distinction between seeing, perceiving, and thinking is critical. This distinction, and apprehending what is lost in transfer between stages of experience and interpretation, are underlying currents of her art practice. In painting series such as "Seeing" (2002) and "Looking" (2003), which interrogate the nature of still life representation, to recent and multiple series of abstract paintings (2012–2017) categorized by titles such as *Chaos and Order*, *Thinking*, *A Memory*, and *Pattern*, Baumeister operates on the liminal margin between logic and intuition.

Baumeister's focus is both timely and relevant and reflects a world that is at a critical stage of reassessment following the social, cultural, political, and economic impacts of globalizing technologies. In "Against the Novelty of New Media: The Resuscitation of the Authentic," art historian Erica Balsom argues how the art world in recent years has rehabilitated a return to the referent and investment in human presence as a reaction to what is effaced in the newly emerging techno-environment: "The resuscitation of the authentic is... a persistent reminder



Blue Sky Thinking, 2004

that there is both a danger and a value in the rejection of things as they are.”¹ For Baumeister, exploring the nature of perception begins with her early years as a figurative painter, where the careful and relentless study of objects yielded critical moments of observation. “I was painting a flower long enough to see it move” she describes, and with this awareness grew the revelation that no matter how much she attempted to isolate reality into one discrete picture, the full scope of her perception fell short in the fixed image. Baumeister’s personal observations as an artist working in the studio also extended to the world around her. In the years following her art training at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (from 1978 to 1983), Baumeister describes one transformative episode in 1985 when she travelled from Canada to Europe at the same time as the Air India Flight 182 bombing. As she attempted to make sense of the tragic event, she picked up multiple newspapers, all with different accounts, narratives, and analyses of what had transpired. “What struck me,” she recounts, “was that I was seeing objective reporting, but all the reporting had something different, and I was left grasping what was real and objective.”

For the past century and a half, painting has been at the center of a struggle over representational power of precisely the kind Baumeister is invested in. A firm underpinning to Baumeister’s approach—exploring the disconnection between objective reality and subjective experience—connects her to a rich history of avant-garde artists who explored the possibilities, challenges, and limits to traditional painting and drawing. The turn to increasing abstraction and expressionism challenged the mimetic tradition of picture composition associated with painting from the Renaissance to the early nineteenth century. This accompanied seismic shifts in the twentieth century as a result of new media and industrializing technologies. Free from rules and predictable referents connected to the long history of realist painting, the move towards abstraction and expressionism allowed a new generation of artists, such as those associated with the Fauves, Cubists, Russian Suprematists, German and Austrian Expressionists, and American Abstract Expressionists, to channel pure will and explore dimensionality and a range of human sensoria in new and unexpected ways. In terms of these formal experiments, Baumeister strongly identifies with the colour palette and sinuous lines of Viennese Secession painter Egon Schiele, for example. Traces of Schiele’s influence can be found in many of her watercolour paintings such as *Like the Wind Knows the Tree* (1994), while her love for the freely-scribbled, playful, graffiti-like works of Cy Twombly emerge in her “Pattern” series of abstract acrylics (2012–2015). Drawing, in particular, is the connective tissue in Baumeister’s art practice, authenticating and grounding the external experience of the world through mark-making.

In terms of content, Baumeister finds inspiration in another related group of twentieth century avant-garde artists—the Dada and Surrealists—who worked to

disrupt the representation of stable objects through strategies of satire, irreverence, and the upending of expectations around art and the role of the artist. Baumeister references, for example, Berlin Dada artist George Grosz, whose drawings and paintings ruthlessly critiqued German society as it gave way to Nazi rule. Not surprisingly, Baumeister aligns her own political and social interests as an artist with that of Grosz, encouraging her audience to pay closer attention, and, in her own words, “read the fine print” in a world that is not always as it appears. Baumeister also raises the importance of Belgian Surrealist artist René Magritte, whose famous work *The Treachery of Images* (*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*) (1929) reveals the ever-present chasm between language, image, and meaning. Magritte’s proposition finds deep resonance in several of Baumeister’s works, perhaps most poignantly in her watercolour painting *Avalanche* (1997) which re-presents and playfully disassembles the semiotics of a tourist postcard.

Turning closer to home, Baumeister is well situated near a city that often prizes a more conceptual approach to art. And while as a painter she has not taken up the camera, motion pictures, or the screen as directly as most artists associated with Vancouver photo-conceptualism, Baumeister is closely aligned with many concerns and interests among a range of Lower Mainland artists through explorations into the crisis of representation and the desire to subvert signs associated with the landscape and human environment. Baumeister’s featured art work for the exhibition, *One of a Kind?* (2017), offers one such potent example. Arranged as a large-scale piece made up of fourteen digitally printed canvases surrounding an original oil painting, the work becomes apparent to the viewer upon closer observation when it is realized that the content printed on each of the canvases is a digital copy of the oil painting. As Baumeister explains, the subject of the original painting—dahlia flowers—was connected both to her online identity as a floral painter (the paintings she sells to a wide public to earn a living), and to a subject matter that she had learned to reproduce through many years of repetitive composition and multi-media formats (graphite, watercolour, acrylics, and oil). Repetition and the copy were foremost in her mind when she conceived the piece, but also, as she describes, “the problem of authenticating what occurs in the real world.” Sharing examples with me, ranging from the problem of locating the original source of honey (sometimes marketed as originating from places that don’t actually have honey bees), to the difficulty of differentiating synthetic from naturally made fabrics, Baumeister’s intention was to replicate a similar process in *One of a Kind?*. Audiences would be confronted with the question of what changed and/or was lost in the move from her original handmade painting to the enlarged digital facsimile made by a machine.

One of a Kind? offers an important meditation on questions of the original and even a reassessment of how Walter Benjamin’s concept of the aura—the uniqueness and aesthetic experience associated with being in the presence of an original work



Avalanche, 1997

of art—can be recast in a twenty-first century world.² As Balsom argues, “understanding what counts as ‘art after the internet’ might necessitate expanding one’s purview far beyond artworks produced through digital means.”³ At the same time, the work is deeply ironic, evoking questions and even cynical reflections on an art world and emerging generation of artists that appear to be losing something in a world where scanning, feeds, and fake news supplant deeper reading, visual literacy, and historical perspective. As Baumeister and I discuss at some length, there is a sense that something deeper, more embodied, and truly lived and experienced, is desired by many. “Time is the only commodity you have,” Baumeister offers, “and it’s how you spend it that is so important. I keep watching these young kids scanning as opposed to living; and I know enough about perception to know that the things we take in are what we ultimately use to create structures and put all other information onto. And if the structure is already filtered through someone else’s lens, and not real, as in experienced through your own senses, how do you authenticate something?” Indeed, the question of how and to what ends art will be created, produced, and disseminated in the future appears closely tied to similar crises around representation, time, and mechanisms of industrialization experienced over a century ago. This time, however, the stakes appear much higher, with spatial and temporal dislocations fundamentally recasting the world of human perception. As internet artist Brad Troemel argues in “Art After Social Media,” “... for the generation of artists coming of age today, it’s the high-volume, high paced endeavour of social media’s attention economy that mimics the digital economy of stock trading... For these artists, art is no longer merely traded like a stock—it is created like one too.”⁴

What can painting teach us today? This is one of the enduring questions we are left with when encountering *In the Realm of Perception*. And while it is true that painting has faced pronouncements of its imminent death many times over the past half century, there is something clearly timely and deeply significant about studying the nature of perception through this particular medium.⁵ As Art historian David Joselit has suggested, pointing to the “transitive” nature of our world today, a world in which digital networks routinely translate cultural artifacts into code, there is something to behold and learn when a body of painting “is submitted to infinite dislocations, fragmentations, and degradations.”⁶ Clearly, as Baumeister observes, there are many undiscovered connections yet to be made and the capacity of art to nurture individuals goes hand in hand with human connection, “For me, my analog world is real to me, it comes from my senses, and I’m certain that is how we authenticate and ground our external experience of our world... I’m always bringing it back to that when I’m painting. I want to create a map of sorts, of something that I feel, I see, I hear, I think, and try to distill the proper components so that you could read the same thing, if you wanted to, or create a paradigm where the relationship between the items creates a meaning.”

NOTES

1. Erika Balsom, “Against the Novelty of New Media: The Resuscitation of the Authentic,” in *You Are Here—Art After the Internet*, ed. Omar Kholeif (Manchester, HOME and SPACE Press, 2017), 76.
2. See Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations* ed. Hannah Arendt. New York, Schocken, 1969, 217–259.
3. Balsom.
4. Brad Troemel, “Art After Social Media,” *You Are Here—Art After the Internet*, ed. Omar Kholeif (Manchester, HOME and SPACE Press, 2017), 42.
5. See for example Douglas Crimp, “There is No Final Picture: A Conversation Between Philip Kaiser and Douglas Crimp,” in *Painting on the Move*, ed. Bernhard Mendes et al (Basel: Kunstmuseum Basel and Schwabe, 2002), 171–179.
6. David Joselit, “Painting Beside Itself,” *October* vol. 130 (Fall, 2009): 134.



Works in the Exhibition

Installation views of
Nicoletta Baumeister:
In the Realm of Perception



Like the Wind Knows the Tree, 1994
Watercolour and chalk pastel on paper



Palimpsest of Memory, ca. 1998
Watercolour, chalk pastel and thread on paper



Memory is a Construction, 1998
Watercolour and chalk pastel on paper



Memory is a Fragment, 1998
Watercolour and chalk pastel on paper



Sweet Ravages of Time, 2010
Watercolour and graphite on paper



Construction of a Leaf, ca. 2002
Wood with watercolour, hair, thread, wood and needle on canvas inlay



Markings, 1989
Watercolour and graphite on paper



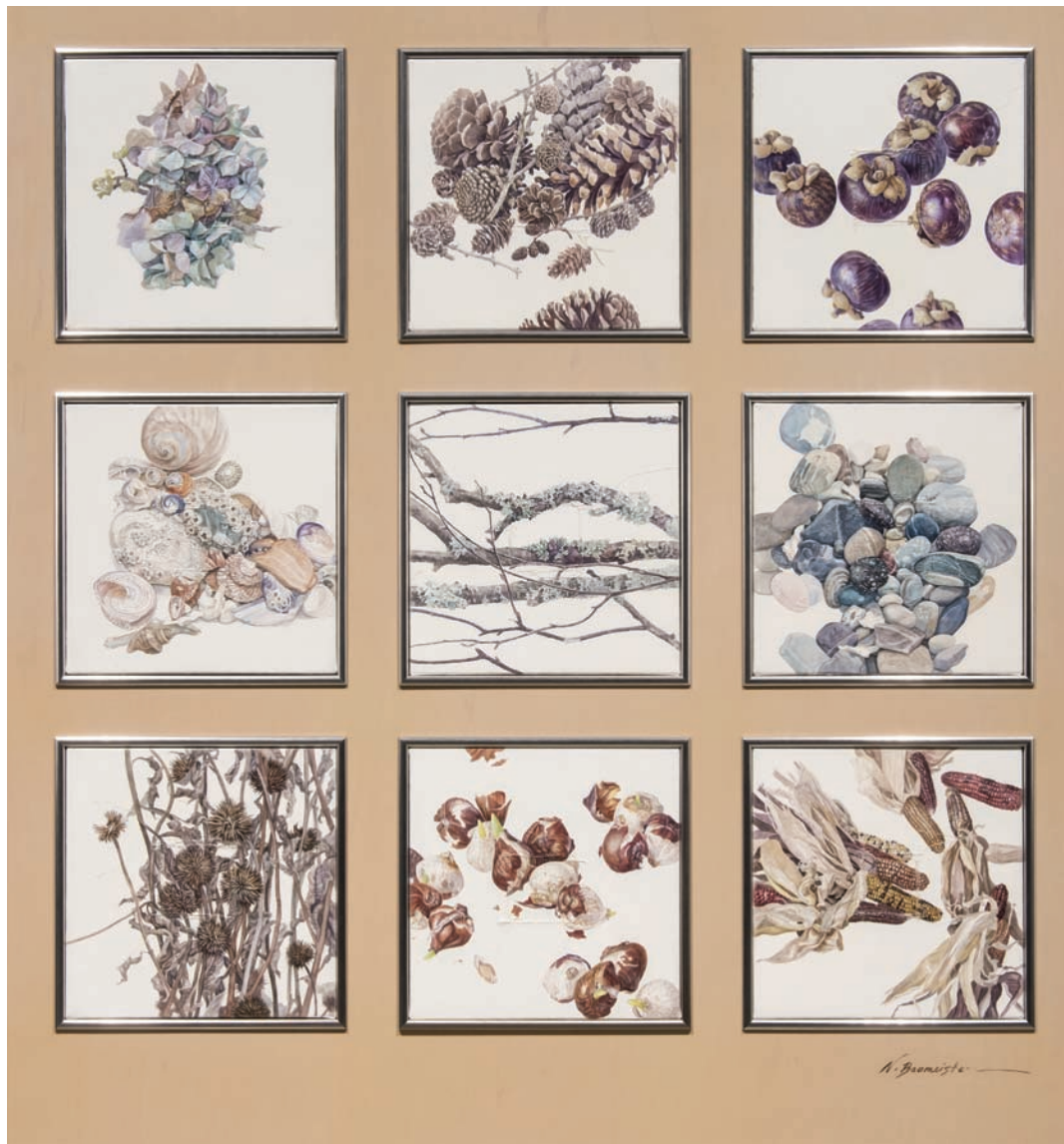
Seeing and Perceiving, 2002
Watercolour, acrylic, thread and hair on canvas



Merritt, ca. 1996
Watercolour and acrylic on paper



Avalanche, 1997
Watercolour on paper



Sense, 2016
Watercolour and thread



Hunger, 2002
Watercolour on paper



In the Garden of Longing, 2002
Watercolour on paper



The Dust We Never See, 2002
Watercolour on paper



Tree Snow, 2001
Watercolour on paper



After the Storm, 2001
Watercolour on paper



Maple diptych, 2003–5
Watercolour on paper





Oak diptych, 2003-5
Watercolour on paper



W. G. Smith



Birch diptych, 2003–5
Watercolour on paper





Buttercup diptych, 2002
Watercolour on paper





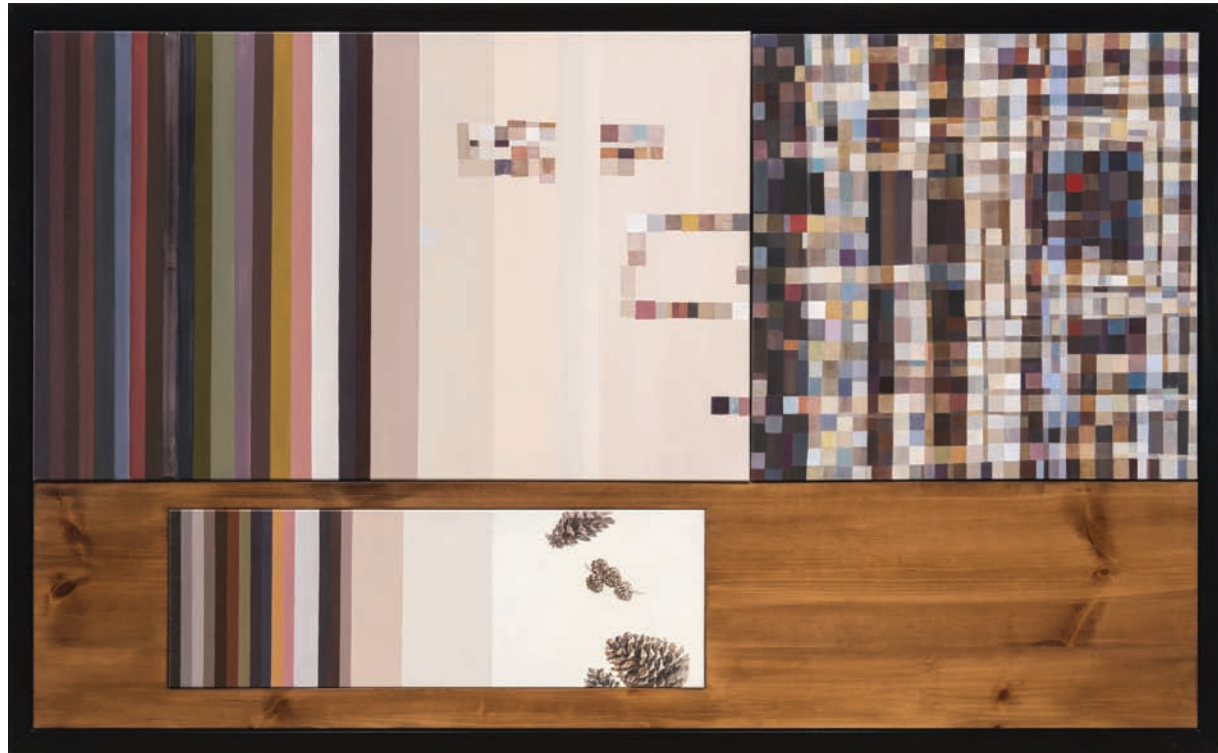
Pebble diptych, 2002
Watercolour on paper





Tulip diptych, 2002
Watercolour on paper

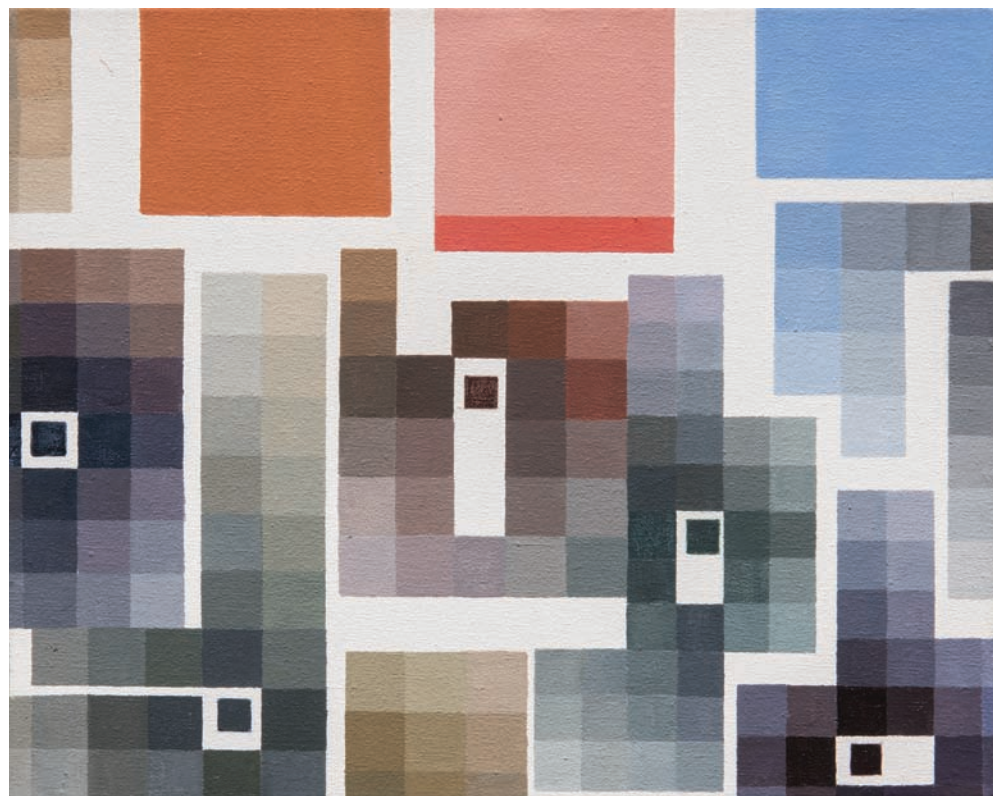




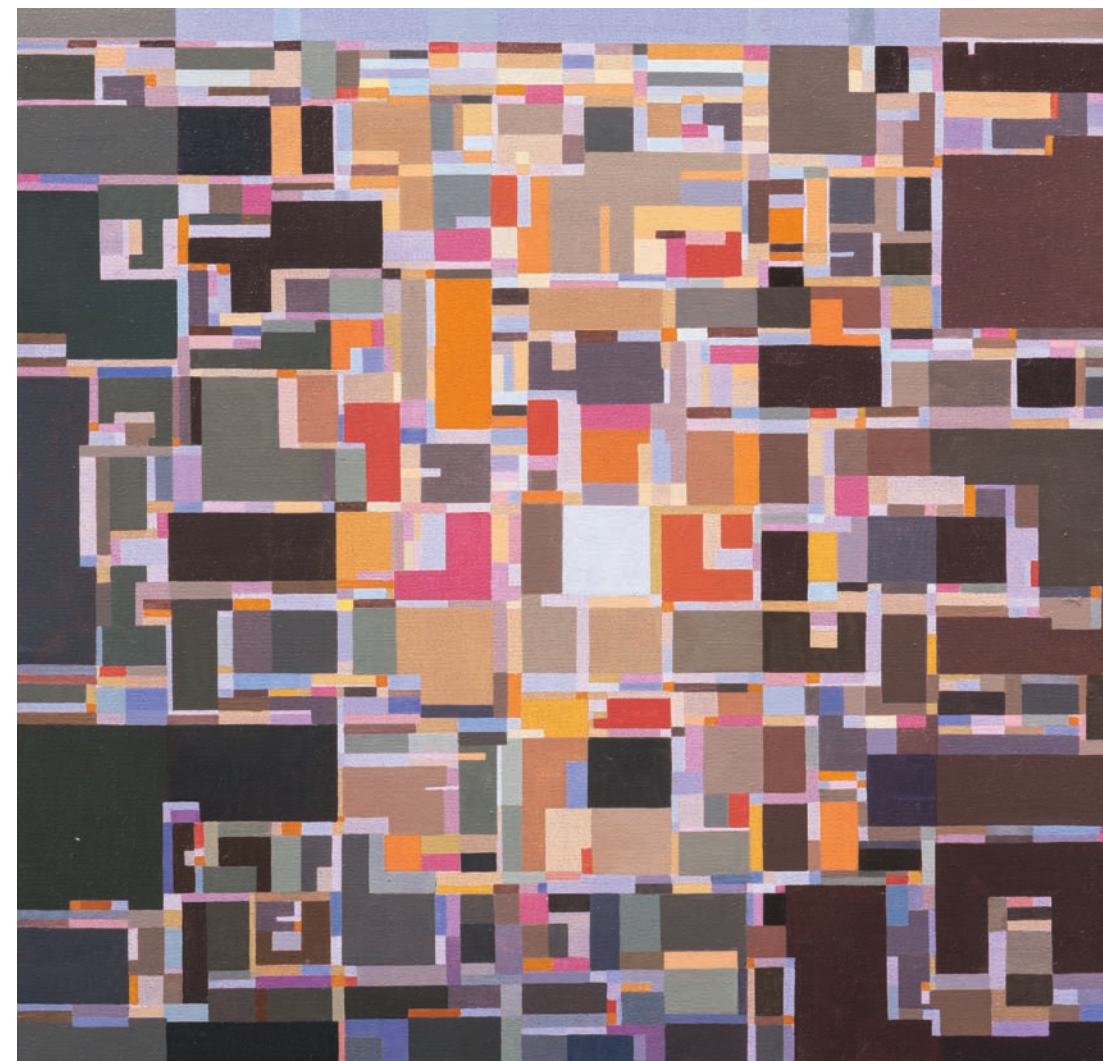
Pine Abstract, 2006
Wood with acrylic and watercolour on canvas inlay



Fir Abstract, 2007
Wood with acrylic and watercolour on canvas inlay



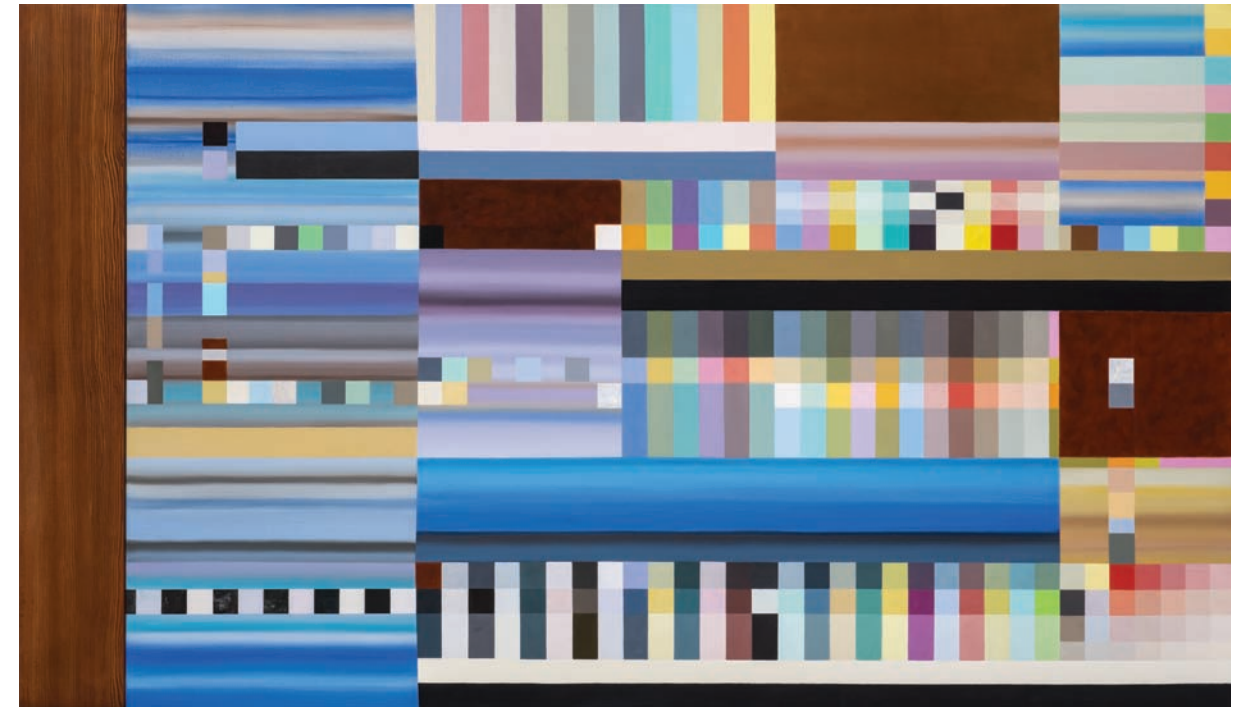
What is Taken Away, 2004
Acrylic on canvas



Blue Sky Thinking, 2004
Acrylic on canvas



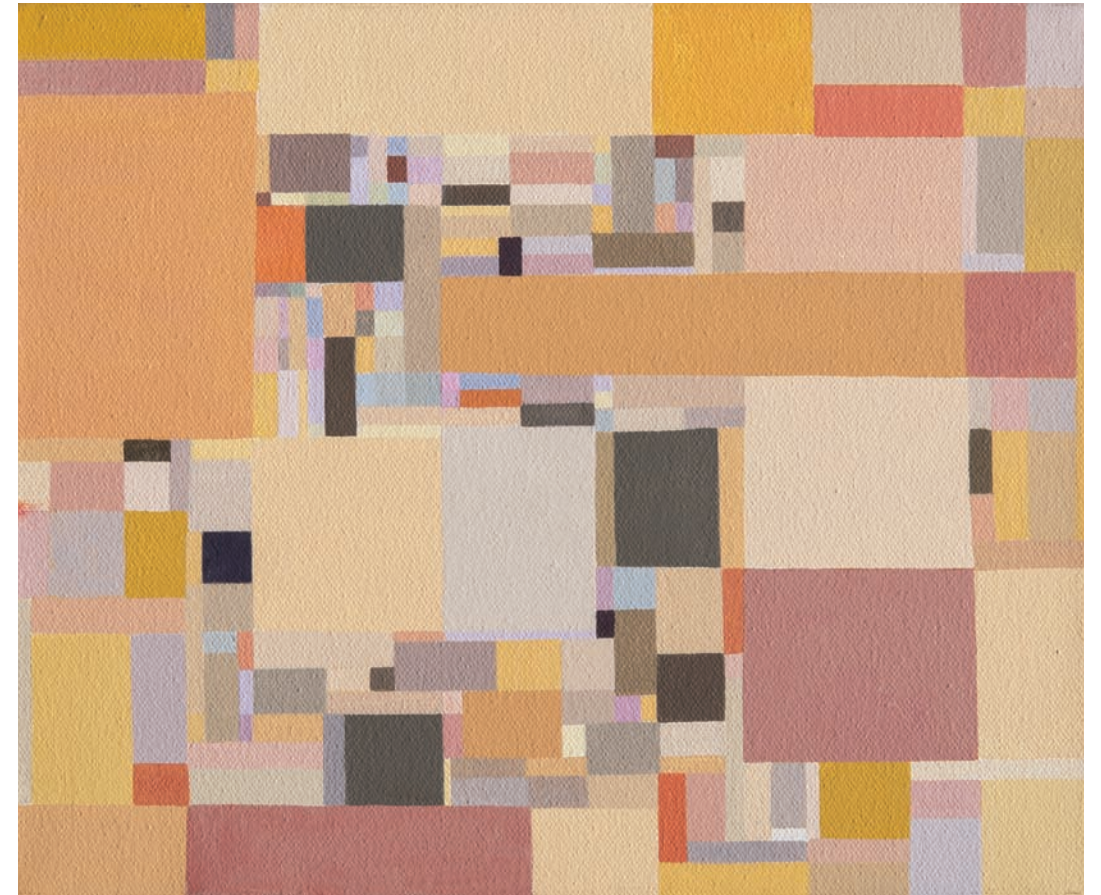
Nascent, 2004
Acrylic on canvas



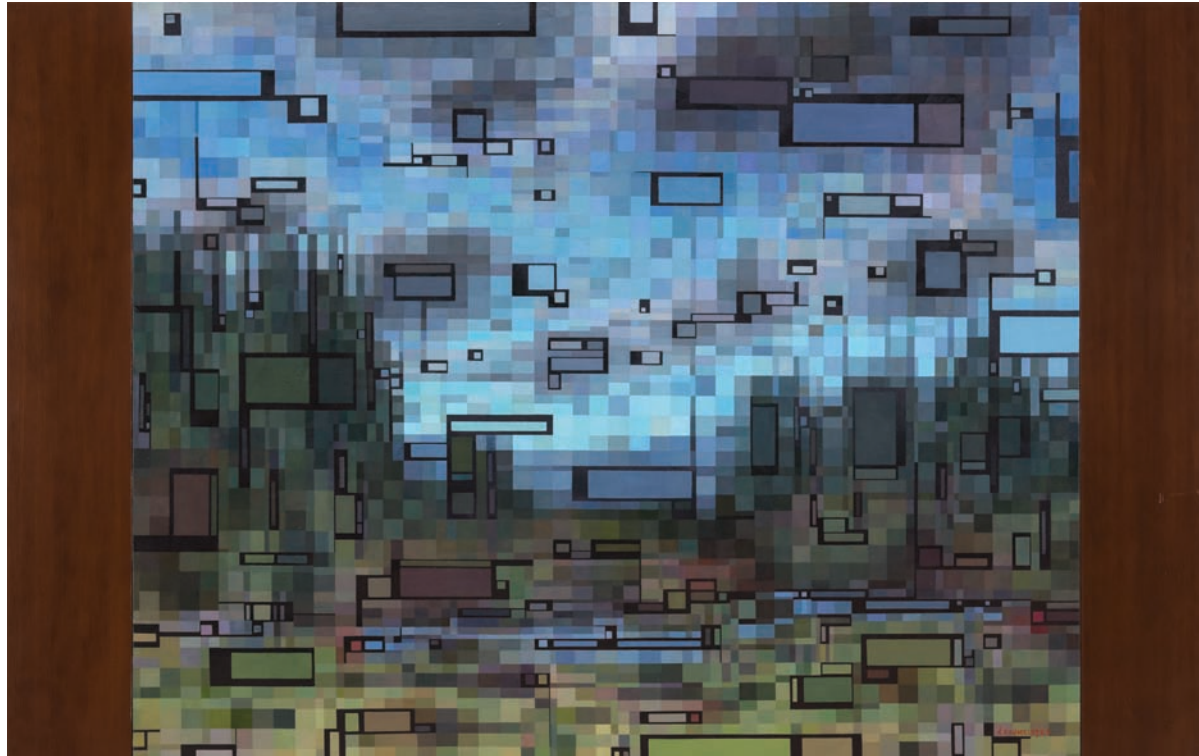
Progression of a Thought, 2005
Acrylic on canvas with wood



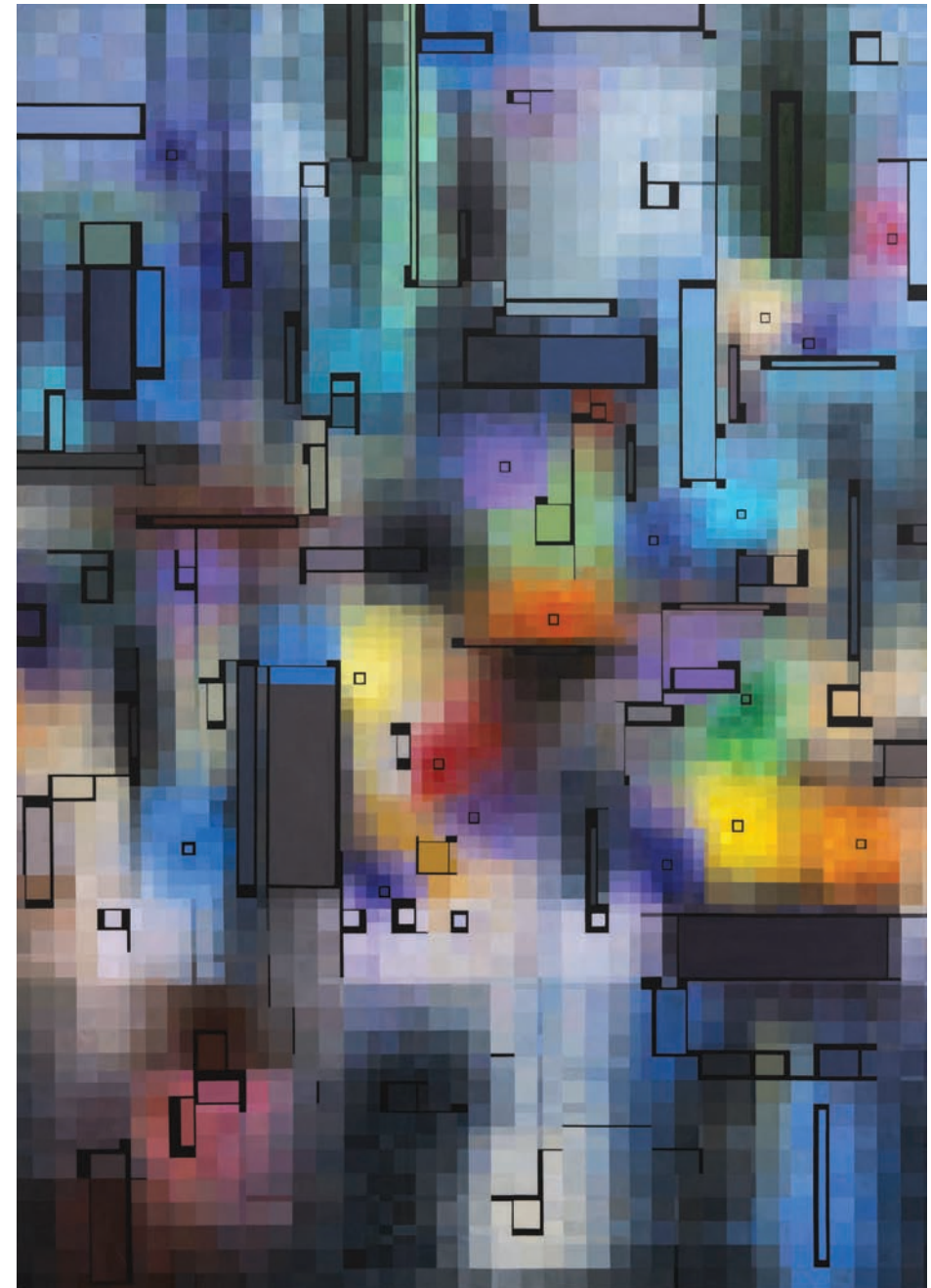
Turning Point of a System, 2005
Acrylic on canvas



Inner Life of an Outwardly Shy Person, 2005
Acrylic on canvas



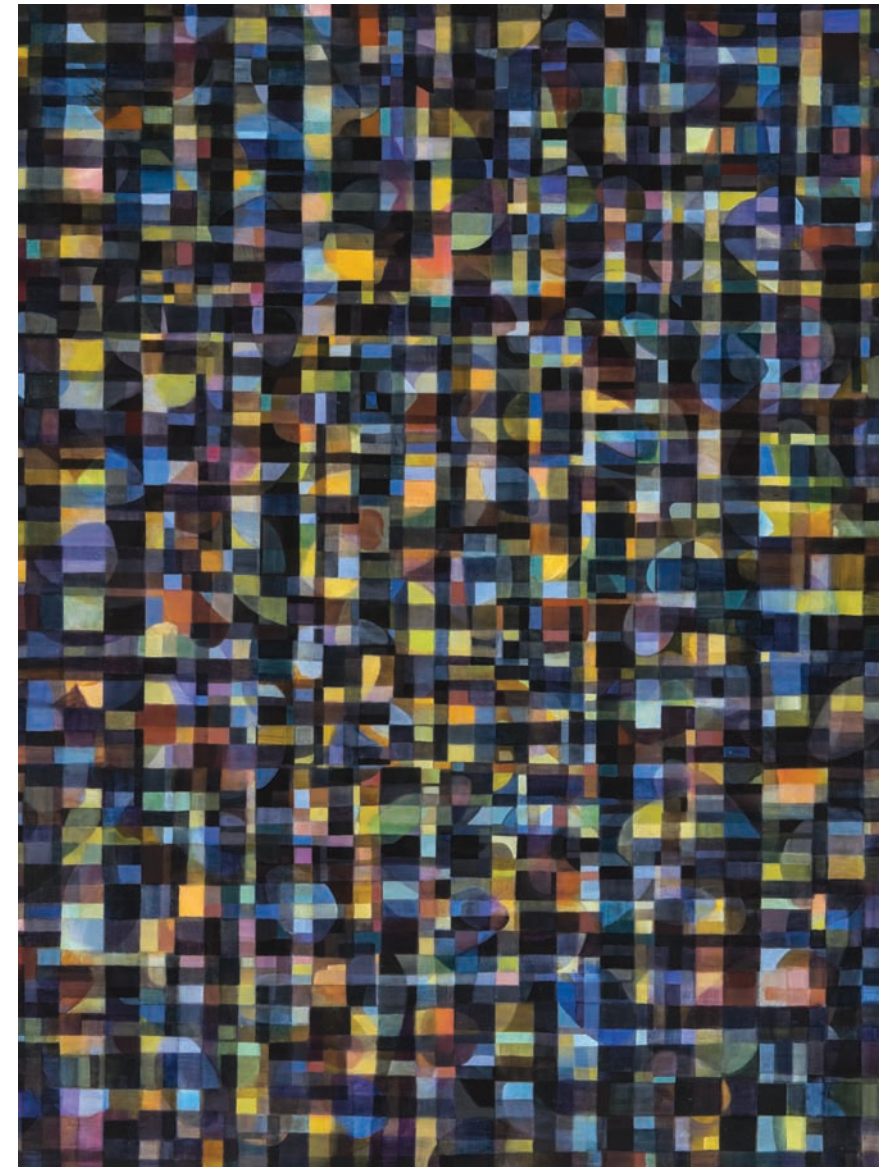
Landscape, 2006-7
Acrylic on canvas



Ideas/Habits/Choices, ca. 2007
Acrylic on canvas



Internal/External Consciousness, 2007-8
Acrylic on canvas



Closing In, 2008
Acrylic on canvas



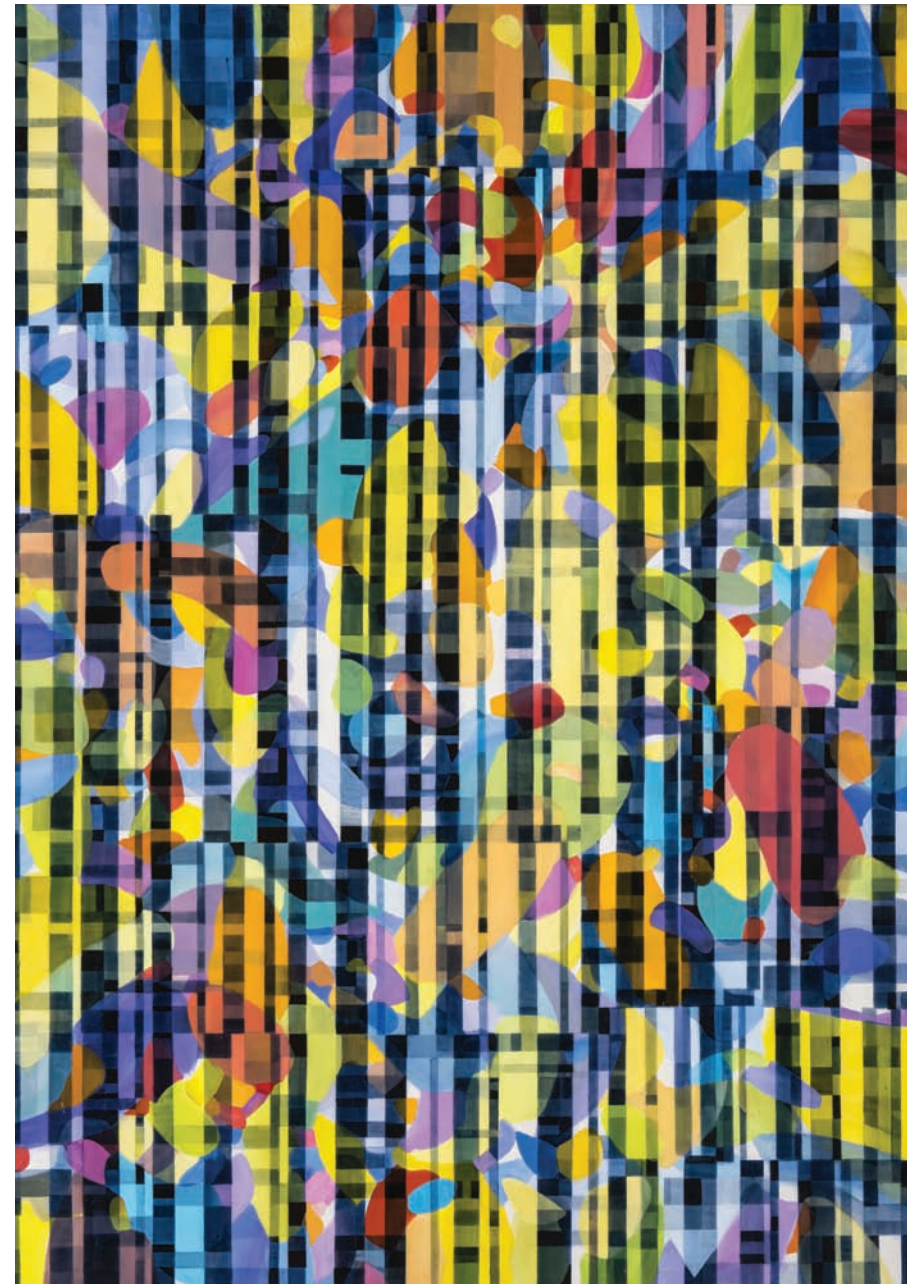
Maze, 2008
Acrylic on canvas



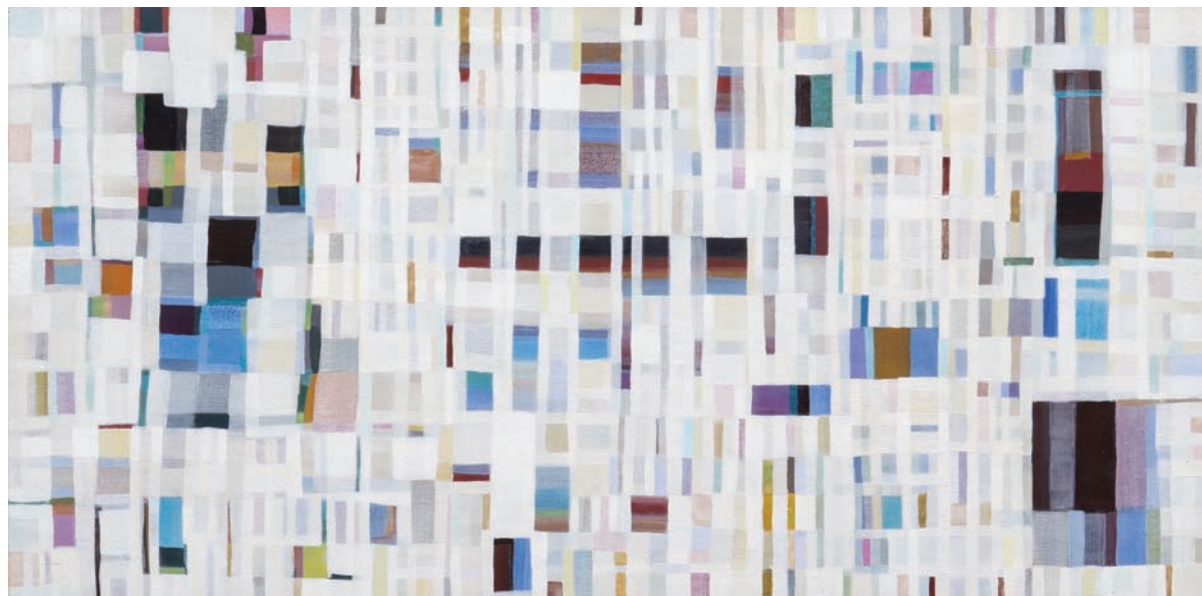
Construct of Intuition, 2009
Acrylic on canvas



Blue Dances, 2010
Acrylic on canvas



Possibilities, 2010
Acrylic on canvas



White Memory, 2005
Acrylic on canvas



Poem, 2012
Acrylic on canvas



A Small Idea, 2010
Wood with acrylic on canvas inlay



The Ineffable, 2010
Acrylic on canvas



Three Days, 2013
Acrylic on canvas



What Lies Below, 2013
Oil on Venetian plaster on board



Installation view of
Original?, 2016–2018
Oil and Inkjet on canvas



Original?, 2016–2018, detail
Oil on canvas

<i>Markings</i> Watercolour and graphite on paper 9 x 14" 1989	<i>Seeing and Perceiving</i> Watercolour, acrylic, thread and hair on canvas 14 x 33" 2002	<i>Birch diptych</i> Watercolour on paper Diptych: 22 x 22" each 2003–5	<i>Fir Abstract</i> Wood with acrylic and watercolour on canvas inlay 46 x 33" 2007
<i>Like the Wind Knows the Tree</i> Watercolour and chalk pastel on paper Private collection Diptych: 40 x 12½" each 1994	<i>Buttercup diptych</i> Watercolour on paper Collection of Valerie and David Olafson Diptych: 4½ x 4½" each 2002	<i>Blue Sky Thinking</i> Acrylic on canvas 24 x 24" 2004	<i>Ideas/Habits/Choices</i> Acrylic on canvas 68 x 48" ca. 2007
<i>Merritt</i> Watercolour on paper Collection of Genevieve Pfeiffer 26 x 19" ca. 1996	<i>Pebble diptych</i> Watercolour on paper Collection of Valerie and David Olafson Diptych: 4½ x 4½" each 2002	<i>What is Taken Away</i> Acrylic on canvas 8 x 10 x 2½" 2004	<i>Internal/External Consciousness</i> Acrylic on canvas 36 x 55" 2007/8
<i>Avalanche</i> Watercolour on paper Collection of Michael and Marie Smith 13 x 20" 1997	<i>Tulip diptych</i> Watercolour on paper Collection of Valerie and David Olafson Diptych: 4½ x 4½" each 2002	<i>Nascent</i> Acrylic on canvas 16 x 20" 2004	<i>Closing In</i> Acrylic on canvas 30 x 40" 2008
<i>Palimpsest of a Memory</i> Watercolour, chalk pastel and thread on paper Surrey Art Gallery permanent collection: SAG2014.17.01 30 x 22" ca. 1998	<i>Hunger</i> Watercolour on paper 7½ x 4¾" 2002	<i>Inner Life of an Outwardly Shy Person</i> Acrylic on canvas 8 x 12 x 2½" 2005	<i>Maze</i> Acrylic on canvas 11 x 14" 2008
<i>Memory is a Fragment</i> Watercolour, chalk pastel and thread on paper 10 x 8" 1998	<i>In the Garden of Longing</i> Watercolour on paper 7½ x 4¾" 2002	<i>Turning Point of a System</i> Acrylic on canvas 24 x 24" 2005	<i>An Idea</i> Acrylic on canvas 26 x 36" 2009
<i>Memory is a Construction</i> Watercolour, chalk pastel and thread on paper 10 x 8" 1998	<i>The Dust We Never See</i> Watercolour on paper 7½ x 4¾" 2002	<i>White Memory</i> Acrylic on canvas 18 x 36" 2005	<i>Construct of Intuition</i> Acrylic on canvas 8 x 10 x 2.5" 2009
<i>Tree Snow</i> Watercolour on paper 6 x 6" 2001	<i>Maple diptych</i> Watercolour on paper Collection of Trish and Graham Marrison Diptych: 22 x 22" each 2003–5	<i>Progression of a Thought</i> Acrylic on canvas with wood 36 x 62" 2005	<i>A Small Idea</i> Wood with acrylic on canvas inlay 16 x 20" 2010
<i>After the Storm</i> Watercolour on paper 6 x 6" 2001	<i>Oak diptych</i> Watercolour on paper Private collection Diptych: 22 x 22" each 2003–5	<i>Pine Abstract</i> Wood with acrylic and watercolour on canvas inlay 33 x 46" 2006	<i>Sweet Ravages of Time</i> Watercolour and graphite on paper Private collection 22 x 30" 2010
<i>Construction of a Leaf</i> Wood with watercolour, hair, thread, wood and needle on canvas inlay 12 x 24" ca. 2002		<i>Landscape</i> Acrylic on canvas Collection of Taryn Boivin and Dave MacDonald 38 x 75¾" 2006–7	<i>Blue Dances</i> Acrylic on canvas 48 x 60" 2010

Possibilities

Acrylic on canvas
Private collection
68 x 48"
2010

The Ineffable

Acrylic on canvas
Collection of Taryn Boivin and
Dave MacDonald
30 x 24"
2010

Poem

Acrylic on canvas
72 x 48"
2012

What Lies Below

Oil on Venetian plaster on board
Private collection
36 x 24"
2013

House and Home

Oil on Venetian plaster on board
Private collection
16 x 20"
ca. 2013

Three Days

Acrylic on canvas
Private collection
20 x 24"
2013

Sense

Watercolour on canvas
Collection of Michael and
Marie Smith
55 x 51½"
2016

Original?

Oil and Inkjet on canvas
188 x 148"
2016–2018

One Roof

Found teacups, found stone, 3-D printed cup,
3-D printed numbers and letters, vinyl, vitrine
60 x 30 x 35½"
2019

Artist's Statement

*“How to make sense of the sensations of being alive?
How is our understanding of reality constructed?”*

In my early twenties I was painting an African violet plant when suddenly I could see them moving in response to sunlight. The real violet was in constant flow and flux and my efforts to fix the appearance of the violet to paper had removed the life from it. It was clear to me from that moment on that reality is experienced as a flow of sensual information. The flow is filtered, sorted and evaluated by the brain, then aided by memory and experience, and assembled into the concept of reality we use to navigate our daily lives.

My painting process uses a similar constructive model in an approach that combines a logical aesthetic and academic analysis with a large dose of intuition. Rather than representing an object's outward appearance, my goal is to convey my “sense” of it. The best days are when intuition and reason are not separate ways of thinking but rather different ways of knowing. One is informed from the senses, the other by outside sources. The overarching drive is to explore and understand a subject, then further, to examine or create meaning within the picture plane.

The world is a fantastic, awe-inspiring place and we are invited to take part in it through the portals of our senses. Visual art is well suited to reflect and convey not only the appearance of things, but also their sense. Combining layers of content in my work, I strive for a balance between object and meaning, between beauty and possibility.



Contributors



Original?, 2016–2018, source painting
Oil on canvas

NICOLETTA BAUMEISTER is a painter interested in exploring the human act of making sense out of sensation. Her work explores the processes of perception, the course of information from seeing to perceiving to understanding a thing. Her artwork, rooted in hyperrealism, has evolved into abstract symbolism in the last fifteen years. Using mainly rectilinear forms and stripes, she explores perception—for example, the difference between what one sees and what one thinks one sees. She holds a Dip.FA (Honours) from Langara College, a BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design (NSCAD), and a Specialization in Goldsmithing (Germany). She has been painting, exhibiting, and winning awards since 1984, as well as teaching students since the late 1990s. She is based in Surrey, BC.

RHYS EDWARDS is a critic, artist, and curator. He has written for *Canadian Art*, *7x7*, *The Capilano Review* and *BC Studies*, and in 2014 he won the *C Magazine* New Critics prize. In 2015, he cofounded the Agent C Gallery with artist Debbie Tuepah in the Newton region of Surrey. As Assistant Curator at Surrey Art Gallery, he has developed multiple exhibitions, including *Alex McLeod: PHANTASMAGORIA*, *Nicolas Sassoon: Liquid Landscapes*, *Elizabeth Hollick: Body Politic* and *Nicoletta Baumeister: In the Realm of Perception*. He graduated with a BA in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of British Columbia in 2013, and lives in Vancouver.

DOROTHY BARENSCOTT is an art historian whose interdisciplinary research relates to the interplay between urban space and emerging technology and media forms in the articulation of a range of modern and postmodern identities. Her essays have appeared in journals such as *Postmodern Culture Journal*, *Invisible Culture*, *History and Memory*, *Slavic Review*, *Mediascape*, *Slovo*, and *Left History*, with examinations of painted panoramas, experimental and mainstream cinema, modern architecture, and conceptual photography. She completed her Ph.D. in Art History, Visual Art, and Theory at the University of British Columbia and is a professor of modern and contemporary art history and theory in Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Fine Arts Department. Outside of her research, Barenscoth regularly contributes art writing to exhibition catalogues, acts as a specialist consultant for Openwork Art Advisory, and leads interdisciplinary student groups on field schools to global art cities.

Acknowledgements

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The artist wishes to thank all of the collectors who have supported her, and lent out works for the exhibition. In addition, she would like to thank Doug Chan of Maker Cube Langley for his assistance in the 3D-printed components of *Under One Roof*, and Dale Ramsey for his assistance in the fabrication of wood elements for her artworks. The artist would also like to thank the Surrey Arts Centre for the opportunity to present her work, the Arts Centre staff for their work on the exhibition, and her family, for their continuing support.



Mountain Goat Habitat Group, Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada

Paint by Redell

Original reference postcard for *Avalanche*



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